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ABSTRACT

Parents of multiple birth children frequently encounter school policies requiring separation of their children in school, regardless of the circumstances, thereby eliminating parents and their children from the decision-making process. This guide from the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs (NOMTC) asserts that research and expert opinions demonstrate that mandatory separation of multiple birth children is ineffective and can be detrimental to their educational and emotional growth. For this reason, NOMTC recommends that placement be evaluated on an individual basis and offers guidelines in the following areas: (1) "Basic Information on Multiple Births"; (2) "Types of Multiples" (identification of twin type, social relationships, intellectual development); (3) "Mandatory Separation Policy: Differing Opinions" (educators, twins, higher order multiples, parents); (4) "Expert Views on Separation"; (5) "The Case for Gradual Separation"; (6) "Reasons To Separate"; (7) "Reasons to Not Separate Multiples"; (8) "Individuality"; (9) "Retention and/or School Readiness of One Multiple"; (10) "Alternatives to Public School"; (11) "Tips for Teachers of Multiples"; and (12) "To Separate or Not To Separate: Who Should Decide?" The guide contains 53 suggested readings and references. A description of NOMTC basic principles is appended. (KB)

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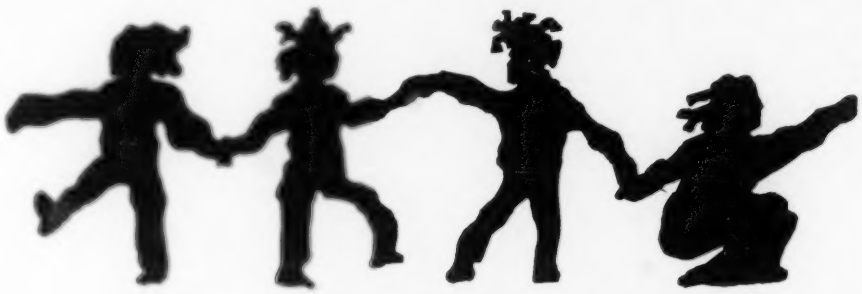
PLACEMENT
Of Multiple Birth Children
IN SCHOOL
A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



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PLACEMENT
OF MULTIPLE BIRTH CHILDREN
IN SCHOOL

A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

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Linda Dreyer, the author of NOMOTC's 1991 booklet on this same topic, is a former elementary school teacher. Linda is a Past President of NOMOTC and has remained active in the organization for over 15 years. Linda's work, as written in the 1991 booklet, continues as the primary thrust of this publication.

Corliss Hubert served as the coordinator of this revised edition. An NOMOTC volunteer worker for over six years, Corliss has also served Mothers of Twins Clubs in many capacities on both the state and local levels. Corliss is a veteran educator, currently working as a K-12 district supervisor of mathematics and high school math teacher.

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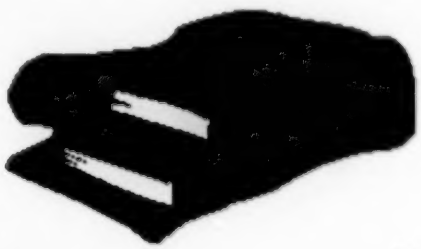

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FOREWORD

Statement Of Purpose

Parents of multiple birth children (twins, triplets, and more) frequently ask, "Is it best for my twins/triplets to be separated or placed together in school?" They are looking for answers to fit their situation and their children. Yet when consulting local school educators for guidance, parents are often confronted with a firm policy requiring separation, regardless of the circumstances. This eliminates parents and their children from the decision-making process.

The National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. formally addressed this topic through two organizational surveys in 1989 and the subsequent publication of a booklet in 1991. At that time, survey results revealed a general lack of written material focusing on multiples in the classroom. Results further indicated half of the educators surveyed believed in a policy of separation of all multiples in school. More than ten years later, results from reissued surveys and anecdotal information from parents of multiples reveal little change in the amount of information or in educator attitudes.

Additional training and study of multiple birth children is still lacking in college education classes. Districts infrequently address multiples in staff development programs. Since the incidence of multiple births continues to rise, educators are going to be increasingly confronted with decisions concerning these children.

Through this updated booklet, NOMOTC takes another look at multiples in the classroom. As in the past, NOMOTC's research and study of experts' opinions regarding classroom placement prove that mandatory separation of multiple birth children is ineffective and can be detrimental to the educational and emotional growth of these children. With this in mind, NOMOTC strongly recommends decisions regarding the classroom placement of multiple birth children be made on an individual basis focusing on:

1. Zygosity of the multiples (identical or fraternal)
2. Research studies
3. Parental input
4. Personality of each child within the multiple birth set
5. Previous separation experiences of this set
6. Articles and books on the subject

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BASIC INFORMATION ON MULTIPLE BIRTHS

While multiples are still a minority group within the entire school population, educators increasingly need to prepare for children that come to school in twos, threes, fours, and more. Indeed, multiple births are rising. Rapid advancement in the scientific field of fertility as well as an increase in the number of women conceiving later in life have contributed to this increase. One example: the birth rate for twins increased 42% from 1980 to 1994. Additionally, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, in the United States in 1996, there were 100,750 babies born as twins, 5,298 as triplets, 560 as quadruplets and 81 as quintuplets and other higher order multiples. This calculates into a probability of having higher order multiples as 1 in 36, or of having twins as 1 in 38.

Multiples can be further categorized. Psychologist Nancy L. Segal, former assistant director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Twin and Adoption Research, addressed these differences in the article, "Not All Twin Types Are Alike."

> *"Researchers have determined that meaningful interpretations and applications of findings about twins require acknowledgment of specific twin types. Each type (identical, fraternal; same-sex fraternal, opposite-sex fraternal) presents unique biological and psychological situations that deserve special attention."*

In order to develop an understanding of the multiples in your school, it is necessary to note the distinguishing characteristics between the above mentioned types.

TYPES OF MULTIPLES

Identification of Twin Type

There are two types of twins: monozygotic (MZ) or identical, one-egg twins; and dizygotic (DZ) or fraternal, two-egg twins. Some researchers also believe there is a third type of twin, sometimes referred to as half-identical or polar body twin. According to those researchers, this rare type of twin may occur when a precursor to an egg splits and is then fertilized by two separate sperm. These twins would have half their genes alike, those from their mother. Until additional evidence of this type of twins becomes available, researchers today continue to classify twins as identical or fraternal.

Of the entire twin population, approximately one-third are identical twins and two-thirds are fraternal twins. Of the fraternal twin population, approximately half are boy/girl sets, while half are same sex sets. Slightly more than half of all twins born are males.

Identical twins result when a single fertilized egg splits at 1 to 14 days after conception. These twins are genetically alike, having the same chromosomes and usually remarkable physical similarities. These twins are NOT entirely identical, however. Each twin is an individual and has a unique personality and traits of his own. Identical twins are always the same sex, have the same blood type, same hair and eye color, and the same nose and ear shapes.

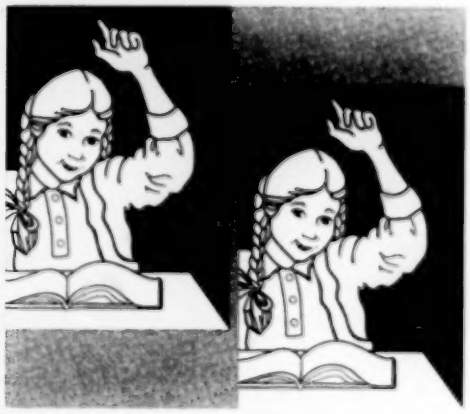
Fraternal twins result from two fertilized eggs. On the average, they share half their genes in common by descent. Fraternal twins are not necessarily any more alike than any two single siblings born to the same mother and father. The difference between fraternal twins and non-twin siblings is that twins share the same intrauterine environment and are the same age. They may or may not be of the same sex.

Although height and weight differences between identical twins are common at birth, these twins tend to become more similar in size with advancing age. In contrast, fraternal same-sex twins may begin life with size resemblance but show a reduction in similarity with advancing age. If fraternal same-sex twins have a high proportion of their genes in common, they may look quite similar to the point of being confused by other people. Fraternal opposite-sex twins, depending upon the number of shared genes, show varying degrees of resemblance and are unlikely to be mistaken for one another.

Twin Types: Differences in Social Relationships

In examining a number of readings, the most common finding is that identical twins share a closer relationship than fraternal twins. For example, Helen Koch, Ph.D., conducted a study in 1966 at the University of Chicago. She compared the social, intellectual, and physical development of 5- and 6-year old fraternal and identical twin pairs and matched non-twin siblings. Identical twins showed less rivalry than other twin types. Same-sex fraternal twins displayed the highest degree conflict.

Dr. Segal also conducted a study at the University of Chicago during which identical and fraternal same-sex twins between 7 and 10 years of age were filmed as they worked jointly on a puzzle completion task. Again, identical twins demonstrated a higher degree of cooperation on this task. All twins were matched in general intelligence so that differences in ability or comprehension of the task did not explain the differences in the degree of cooperation.



The relationship between opposite sex twins seems to differ from those of other types of twins. This is most likely due to the basic differences in male-female development. When Helen Koch analyzed the social relationships between members of young boy-girl twins, she found that females emerged as the more dominant members and chose their peers over their twin siblings as playmates. The female twins tended to be more critical of their twin brothers than their twin brothers were of them. Conversely, the males indicated an appreciation of their twin sisters' guidance but felt somewhat threatened by their female twins' superiority.

Twin Types: Differences in Intellectual Development

Several studies have shown that, in general, identical twins display an average difference of five points in IQ while fraternal twins differ by approximately ten points. It was also found that fraternal twins are more similar in IQ than ordinary brothers and sisters.

It has also been demonstrated that twins on the average score several points below the population mean on standard tests of intelligence. Since many IQ tests rely on verbal ability, the decline may be due to the tendency toward early delayed speech development in twins.

Because twins are frequently premature, often develop their own language, and parents have less time to help develop verbal skills, speech development in twins may be approximately three months slower than in single birth children. By the time multiples are nearing eight years old, they have usually "caught up" to single birth children.

Types of Higher Order Multiples

Higher Order Multiples is a term generally used to describe three or more babies born to the same mother during the same pregnancy. Over the years, this type of multiples has also been referred to as "Supertwins" or "Grand Multiples." Whatever the name, they represent a wide variety in terms of genetics, social, and intellectual development. Higher Order Multiples can be all identical, all fraternal, or a mix of identical and fraternal twins. For example, one set of triplets might be identical girl twins/fraternal boy. Generally, however, higher order multiples are fraternal. Many times higher order multiples are born prematurely. If

Most parents call them by their given names. Relatives and friends may refer to them as the triplets, the quadruplets, and that uncharted territory called "and more." Doctors and hospitals tend to assign them letters of the alphabet, and authors, researchers, and statisticians have their own label of choice, "higher order multiples."

Lauretta Shokler

this is the case, they need to be monitored closely for delays in development in the same manner as with any other premature or low birthweight child.

MANDATORY SEPARATION POLICY: DIFFERING OPINIONS

Educators

When consulting local educators, many parents report facing an ironclad policy concerning the separation of multiple birth children in school. Many find that although there is usually no written school board policy to dictate separation, there often exists a policy generated by the school principal. A report of a study done in 1976 by Ramona Emmons, then a Ph.D. candidate at Purdue University, is discussed by Terry Pink Alexander in her book, **Make Room for Twins**.

This study examined twins' classroom placement at the elementary school level and showed that both parents and principals identified the principal as the one who decided school placement. Of 168 randomly selected principals from 10 state school directories, 83 percent of the principals favored separate placement for twins. Nine percent of these principals went so far as to recommend that parents send twins to two different schools if two separate classrooms were not available within the same school. Of the principals responding, less than four percent were flexible in their decisions concerning the classroom placement of twins.

In 1989 NOMOTC conducted a random survey of 1,423 teachers and principals across the United States. Of the educators surveyed, half of them believed in a policy of separation of all multiples in school. When this survey was reissued in 1999, that number dropped to 43 percent, but is still indicative of the inclination to enforce mandatory separation. These surveys indicate that many educators were unsure about important issues relevant to the education of multiples. Several areas that need to be addressed educationally were identified in the survey. For one, there has been a lack of written material and educational programs about multiples in the educational field. Only 15 percent of the respondents had the subject of multiples discussed in their college education classes. Moreover, only one percent had a staff development or district training session addressing the issues of educating twins.

Why do educators believe that multiple birth children must be **routinely** separated in school? Since educators consider the promotion of positive self-concept among children to be a top priority, they work to insure the healthy social, emotional, creative, physical, and intellectual growth of children in school. The conclusion, then, is that separation policies exist

because educators believe separation is healthy for multiple birth children. In contrast, though, what proof is there that positive self-image does not develop among twins in the same classroom?

Based on the fact that no research has established that twins should be separated, a 1992 study by Nancy Segal and J.M. Russell suggested the following guidelines to help educators in making placement decisions. The study said decisions should take into account the twins' social relationship, social skills with other students, intellectual abilities, and special needs of the twin pair. Some considerations should be given to zygosity and the individual circumstances of each set of twins. If twins are to be placed in the same classroom, separate play and study groups can be used to foster independence.

Twins

How do twins feel about classroom placement? In the study by Emmons, the report indicated that out of the 249 twin pairs enrolled at the schools, only 55.1 percent preferred to be separated, though 77.5 percent were separated. In another study done by Elliott, who was working toward a M.Ed degree at Brock University in Ontario, 167 persons responded to a questionnaire. Of the persons responding, answers from both members of 73 twin sets between the ages of 12 and 73 were included. The results:

41% agreed with decisions made on their behalf.
51% favored separation, but not in early childhood.
31% favored total separation from the start of elementary school.
25% chose gradual separation after grade 3 or grade 6 if there was a concern.

The findings from the questionnaire also indicated:

- twins want involvement in matters which affect them personally;
- twins who are never given the opportunity to experience being together or being separated are robbed of an opportunity that only twins can experience;
- multiples who experience alternating styles throughout their early years will not harbor feelings of resentment for having been treated as singletons, completely disregarding their bond of twinship.

A twin herself, Kay Cassill wrote the following in her book, **Twins: Nature's Amazing Mystery**.

"At the same time that they are given the 'two for one'

treatment by casual acquaintances and are even possibly under pressure from family to remain alike and stay together, twins are often confronted with well-meaning school teachers, guidance counselors, and psychologists who insist that they make an abrupt, definite break with each other in school. This is what happened to my sister and me, and many other twins report that they were confronted with similar dilemmas. In our case, it wasn't just the idea of enforced separation that annoyed me; it was the belief on the part of strangers that they knew what was best for my twin and myself. Such good intentions coupled with poor judgment may set the twin bond in concrete; some duos acquire an 'it's us against the world' attitude and in the process ensnare themselves."

Nancy J. Sipes, Ph.D., and Janna S. Sipes, J. D., of San Diego, CA, are identical twins and co-authors of **Dancing Naked in Front of the Fridge and Other Lessons from Twins**. In an article in *Twins Magazine* they also wrote about their forced separation in the first grade.

"As was predicted by the school officials, we did adjust to being apart in school, on some level," they wrote. "Yet, for us, a pattern of dependency had been set that would follow us into adulthood."

Twins feel that the best policy is no policy at all.

In other words, separation can also be counter-productive.

Psychologist David Hay, director of LaTorbe University's (Australia) ongoing study of 560 different sets of school-age twins, said in an article in PIVOT magazine:

"It is interesting that when we ask twins about their feelings on this topic (school placement), the only twins who complain about what has happened to them are some of those who have been separated."

Upon examination of the two studies by Emmons and Elliott, it would appear that all twins do not want to be placed in separate classrooms, just as all twins do not want to be placed in the same classroom. Twins feel that the best policy is no policy at all.

Higher Order Multiples

If placement of twins in school is a difficult question for parents and educators, the problem is further complicated in higher order multiples. Due

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to limited school facilities, such as only two kindergarten or first grade classes in a building, school officials and parents may have no choice but to keep triplets or quadruplets together in pairs, threes or fours. Another dimension and complication to the decision may be the special needs of the higher order multiples who are more likely to have learning disabilities than the singleton child.

Jill Heink, mother of triplet girls now in the seventh grade, has kept her multiples together at her request and with each teacher's approval each year of their schooling. She feels that they have not been hampered socially or academically. Indeed, she says that being together has given her girls a sense of security and comfort when dealing with the demands of school. She is grateful to the school system for being open to her input for she has heard from other parents whose children have suffered under mandatory separation policies.

A study completed in 1997 by Denina Brown for a dissertation through the University of Denver further explored the classroom placement of higher order multiples. As the mother of triplets, Brown interviewed both parents and teachers on this question and other educational issues involving higher order multiples. She concluded that schools need to revisit the placement of children annually. Further, teachers are urged to examine the academic and emotional needs of the children, evaluate classroom observations, and consider recommendations from previous teachers, as well as from the parents and the students themselves. Brown also suggested that schools need to obtain more knowledge in general about the multiple birth population.

Parents

How do parents of multiples feel about the issue of separation? Gleeson, Hay, Johnston, and Theobold concluded from their survey that the multiple birth family is more likely to have a dispute with the education system than with any other service. The authors conducted a nationwide study in 1990 in Australia which concluded that there must be more communication between the parents and school. Parents need to realize that separation is not permanent and a **flexible approach** to separation should be taken. These researchers also suggested that schools collect more empirical data to aid in the separation decision and to include information on multiples during teacher training.

In a 1999 NOMOTC survey of parents, most agreed that no policy regarding classroom placement should be set. This survey was completed by mothers of multiples, with the majority of those having children in grades preschool

through elementary school. Results determined that almost all of the multiples had been separated at some time in their schooling, about half of which were due to a school policy on separation. In contrast, 50 percent of the mothers reported that their multiples were currently placed in the same classroom (mostly pre-kindergarten and kindergarten), and about one-half of those said they made the decision not to separate their multiples themselves.

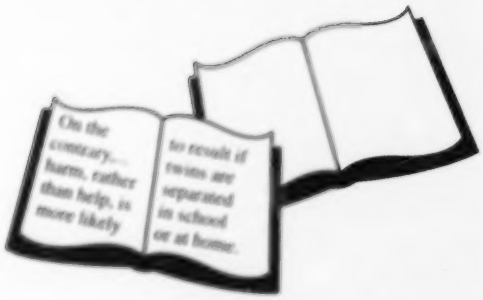
According to the study reported by Emmons and discussed by Alexander, 78.5 percent of the parents favored separate placement. Whether the feelings of the parents in this study differed if they were themselves twins is unknown. However, according to the survey done by Elliott, 38 percent of those parents, who were themselves twins chose NO separation for their own twin children. These findings would indicate that being a member of a twin set is a unique experience. Perhaps parents and educators alike would change their minds about separation if they had experienced being a twin.

In fact, the heavy vote in favor of separation by parents who participated in the Emmons study may not be representative of their true sentiments. Most members of Mother of Twins or Parents of Multiples Clubs are extraordinarily exposed to individualizing theories through books, articles, and lectures at meetings. In addition, many parents are influenced by twin separation policies in their community schools as they perceive that teachers and principals are the "experts" in all matters concerning education. In the end, Emmons concluded that communication between all parties is needed and placement should be on an individual pair basis. Comments of parents of multiples on the most recent NOMOTC survey concur. There are as many reasons for separating twins as there are for non-separation.

The clear message for educators and school policy makers is that the best policy is no policy at all.

EXPERT VIEWS ON SEPARATION

In the book **Twins and Supertwins**, author Amram Scheinfeld speaks about the origins of separation policies in schools. He pointed out that the idea of separating twins in school is in line with the idea of "individualizing" them and that this is a comparatively new idea. He said that in 1948 the late Professor Horatio H. Newman was trying to correct the widespread belief that it would be harmful to ever separate twins in school when Newman wrote, "It is a common notion that it is injurious to twins - especially identical twins - to separate them: for example, to send each to a different school or college." Newman pointed out that pairs of twins may differ in their attitudes toward each other, and that one type might never want to be separated while "reluctant" twins who resent the fact that they are alike, might want to be separated. Newman went on to say, "Whether any harm would ensue from



separating the former type, may be determined only by actually separating them and seeing."

There have been few studies done on the subject of separation of multiples in school, most of them having been anecdotal in nature. Scheinfeld addresses this lack of scientific research in his book when he says, "...while many parents and teachers have assumed that the need for separating twins has long been established by scientific research, the fact is that no valid study on the point had been made prior to the very recent one by Dr. Howard Mittman."

Dr. Mittman intensively questioned and tested high school students ranging from 15 to 18 years of age. Included were 22 sets of identical twins, 21 sets of same-sex fraternal twins, and 21 pairs of same-sex singleton siblings. Dr. Mittman drew the following conclusions as quoted in Scheinfeld's book:

> *"While changes in personality development do accompany twinship, they are not, as many believe, necessarily detrimental to the child's life adjustments. On the contrary, twinship appears to be accompanied by a slightly superior social adjustment; harm, rather than help, is more likely to result if twins are separated in school or at home."*

In another study included in the November 1970 edition of *The Research Journal*, a publication of the University of Maryland's College of Education, researchers (Leeper and Skipper) from Florida State University set out to investigate the effects of placement of twins in the same or separate classrooms in terms of achievement, acceptance and adjustment. At the conclusion of the study, the authors summarized their findings as follows:

> *"Most of the research done on the separation of twins in school suggests that separation is advisable. In this study, twins in grades one through six who had not been separated in the classroom were paired with those who had been. Significant differences were sought in achievement, social acceptance, and adjustment. Some differences were discovered at certain grade levels, but no reliable pattern emerged. The authors see these results as indicating separation is not necessarily advisable."*

The statement that "all experts agree about separating twins" appears to be a myth. For example, Dr. Benjamin Spock says in his child care book: "It seems foolish and cruel to have an arbitrary rule about separation of twins in school when there is no need."

Drs. Kizziar and Hagedorn, themselves twins, wrote in the book, **Gemini:**

The Psychology and Phenomena of Twins:

> *"Existing research fails to either reject or endorse separation of twins at school. Our study supports the premise that each pair of twins must be considered individually before such a judgment is made, and that this decision should be made each year, since the youngsters and the circumstances are constantly changing...Many twins seem to thrive when they are in the same class. Neither depends upon the other, and they enjoy being together and learning together. If they are happy and seem well-adjusted, there is usually no reason for them to be separated...No matter how well twins seem to be doing in classes together, it is wise for them to be separated periodically to make certain that each can continue to make a successful adjustment apart from his twin."*

Drs. Ann McGreevy and Joseph Renzulli seem to support the view of Hagedorn and Kizziar. In their report of a study conducted in 1984, "Connecticut Twin Study: A Study of Twins Included and Not Included in Gifted Programs," they say the following:

> *"Classroom placement of twins in school should be decided individually, case by case, with teachers, parents, and twins themselves. Placement may vary from grade to grade. Research suggests that in some cases, the twin not doing as well academically may perform significantly better when placed with his or her twin for all or part of the school day."*

Although administrators and teachers may feel they know what is best for the education of all students in their care, the truth is that problems associated with the education of multiple birth children are rarely addressed in teacher preparation courses at the university level. On the 1999 NOMOTC educators survey, 80 percent of teachers responding from one school district in New Jersey replied negatively to the statement, "some of my college education classes dealt with the subject of multiples in school." This lack of information on the college course level may be somewhat offset by the apparent increase in experience in teaching multiples in recent years. On the 1999 NOMOTC educators survey, 80 percent of the respondents had taught at least one member of a set of multiples (up from 75 percent in 1989) and 62 percent had taught two members of a set of multiples (up from 42 percent). With over 90 percent of the teachers having 10 or more years of experience in the classroom, educators today may be better able to understand the unique aspects of educating multiples than in the past. **This survey further indicated that almost all teachers felt that the parents and the school should work together as a team in making placement decisions and each child should be considered individually when that decision is made.**

THE CASE FOR GRADUAL SEPARATION

Even those experts who support separate classroom placement do seem to be in agreement that separation should be gradual. In an article in *Twins Magazine*, Dr. Barry E. McNamara of the Department of Special Education at Hofstra University and his wife, Francine, who is a certified social worker, explained:

> *"We are not insensitive to the negative aspects of this separation. For many twins, this (kindergarten, first grade) may be the first time they will spend considerable time away from their co-twin. Therefore, we believe that parents should provide 'separate' experiences as early as possible. At the same time, they (parents) should impress upon school personnel that while they may support separate classes, they want the process to be one that is sensitive to the needs of their children."*

Kay Cassill, in pointing out the detriment to premature separation, said:

> *"Since twins face a double separation as they enter school - separation from home and separation from each other - the traumatic experience may so affect them that they present the teacher with disciplinary problems, whereas, they have never before been anything but model children."*

In Kay Cassill's book, Peggy Scantland, a mother with a background in elementary education, says:

> *"My background and education is in elementary education, but my feelings about separation or togetherness of multiples in school have been developed because I'm a mother of twins - not a teacher. I do NOT think twins should be routinely separated in school, particularly in the early grades. The child leaving home for the first time is making a tremendous change. To be leaving MOM and a twin sibling at the same time would be too much to ask."*

Martha J. McAfee, then a graduate student at Texas Women's University, wrote in an article which first appeared in the Fall 1976 issue of *MOTC's Notebook*:

> *"The first school separation will be more or less difficult depending on the preparation at home...Separation at school can be traumatic for one or both of the pair. There is, in effect, a double separation - separation from home to enter school, and separation from each other. This may be too much for the children emotionally."*

Baker, Fanelli, Meyer, and Molten of the Mainline Mothers of Twins Club

are authors of the booklet, *Twins: A Guide To Their Education*. The booklet contains the following quotation on the subject:

> *"Even identical twins can be separated successfully at this time (entrance to kindergarten), if they are mature enough and if, during the preschool years, the parents have made a point of strengthening the individuality of each twin by planning separate outings, visits, activities and group play..."*

However, it is necessary to keep in mind that not all parents of multiples will be able to provide separation experiences. The lack of finances, time, and parenting information are the main obstacles. First, modern society is comprised of working mothers. Many families may not be able to provide a preschool separation experience; in fact the financial burdens may prevent parents from providing preschool experiences of any kind. Second, with parents working outside the home, many lack the time to plan separate outings for multiples. The problem increases dramatically with family size. With increasing pressure to take an active part in their children's schooling - pressure to volunteer at school, necessity to guide their children through a multitude of school projects and homework, desire to provide outside activities - by the time their children are in elementary school, time is a precious commodity for parents. Third, not all parents of multiples have access to information advising them to prepare their children for separation in the preschool years. While some parents lack the finances and time to educate themselves about parenting strategies, some disagree with the concept of early separation for their youngsters.

The Rutherford School District, a suburban K-12 district of 2,250 students (located across the Hudson River from New York City in northern New Jersey) addresses this variety in pre-kindergarten experience by maintaining an open policy in regards to placing multiples. For example, the five elementary schools in the district run half day session kindergartens and, mostly for the convenience of the parents, multiples are placed in the same classroom for kindergarten. According to one of the principals, Mrs. Marge Vaccarino, this arrangement also affords the teacher and principal the opportunity to see how the multiples interact with each other and with other students. Decisions about separation are then made at the first grade level on a case by case basis. This school year, Mrs. Vaccarino is assessing the placement of a set of triplets (identical boys and a girl) who are now in

kindergarten. The girl has distanced herself from the brothers and mostly ignores her brothers in school. The boys have not adjusted well to school due to their immaturity. Mrs. Vaccarino feels strongly that the boys will benefit from separation at the first grade level and she will make this recommendation to the parents.

In another situation from the Rutherford Schools, identical girl twins were kept together in first grade at the request of the parents. However, the girls had different abilities and one twin especially was not functioning well in the classroom. This twin would not make a move unless she saw what her sister was doing and consequently was not learning on her own. When the girls were moved to separate first grades in the middle of the year, the transformation was astounding. Both girls seemed to blossom in their own classrooms.

In the Sipes article, the sisters acknowledged separation is inevitable for twins—whether it happens in the first grade or not. But when it happens too early in twins' lives, it has a profound effect, not to be underestimated. They state they believe that twins need to be left together as long as possible (depending on the maturity and personalities of the twins) in order for them to be given the opportunity to feel safe before being separated.

Unless there is a strong reason to separate, enlightened school principals recommend keeping twins together for at least the kindergarten year and perhaps, the first year of school. This recommendation is strongly supported by Dr. David Hay, who says:

> *"At the time twins start school, there is much to be said for keeping them together until they adapt to the classroom... They may not always be together in the class, but even having one's twin on the other side of them can be reassuring."*

Therefore, from a parental viewpoint, it is wise to determine the separation policy of the school system before conflicts arise with the district. This advice was offered by McNamara and McNamara in their 1991 study. They also caution that parents choose their "battles" carefully and try to maintain a good relationship with school personnel.

REASONS TO SEPARATE

Although there is no substantial evidence to support the policy that multiples must be placed in separate classrooms in order for them to grow and develop as individuals, sometimes circumstances do exist which would indicate that separation is advisable. Sheryl McInnes and Irene Campbell of Parents of Multiple Birth Association, Inc. (POMBA, Canada) provide the following examples of such circumstances.

• Constant "togetherness" is hindering the development of social skills in

one or both.

- A "division of labor" exists.
- Insensitive comparisons have led to feelings of inadequacy in one twin.
- The twins form a "power unit" causing disruptive behavior.
- Twins exploit the twinship to cheat or play tricks.
- One twin appears to resent the lack of privacy resulting from sharing a classroom.
- One twin proves to be a constant distraction to the other.

Additional reasons for possible separation are:

- In opposite-sex pairs, the female multiple is overprotective or "mothering" a male multiple.
- In skill-grouped classrooms where the abilities of one member of a set of multiples are far above those of his other multiple/s.
- Classmates frequently compare the multiples, resulting in negative feelings in one of the multiples.
- The multiple relationship causes undue disruption in the classroom, and standard procedures for classroom management can not eliminate the problem.
- The multiples WANT to separate.

Wise parents and educators will realize that some of the above behaviors may be evident one year and not the next.

The 1999 NOMOTC educators' survey found that 43 percent of the teachers thought twins should be separated if two equal classrooms were available and the students were working on the same level. Eighty-two percent of the educators thought that this separation should not depend on twin type. The same reasoning could be applied in cases of higher order multiples.

REASONS TO NOT SEPARATE MULTIPLES

Listed below are some reasons given for keeping multiples together in the classroom:

- Major emotional upheavals have occurred in the family - i.e., death, divorce, a move, etc.
- Only one classroom is available.
- UNEQUAL education due to two different teachers employing different methods of teaching.
- Multiples are at or near the same skill level in a skill-based classroom.
- The multiples have met educational goals successfully while in the same classroom in the past, and they WANT to continue to remain together.

Twinline, a nonprofit twin study agency in Berkeley, CA, makes four suggestions regarding school placement.

1. Do not separate twins who want to be together. Forced separation can

damage self-esteem, inhibit language development, and delay learning.

2. Do not automatically separate twins in their first school year. Such a separation adds to the stress of starting school and may actually increase the twins' need to be together.
3. Allow twins as much independence as they are ready to handle. Twins flourish when allowed to separate on their own timetable.
4. Encourage twins to choose separate classes as they gain confidence in the school situation.

This reasoning, pro and con, is summarized in NOMOTC's position paper, "Guidelines for the Education of Multiple Birth Children." (See Appendix.) The guidelines, aimed at educators and school support staff, outline the special academic, social, and emotional needs that can affect multiple birth children in an educational setting. Specifically, these guidelines address seven areas that both educators and parents should consider in order to insure the best possible educational settings for multiple birth children. Most importantly, NOMOTC suggests "schools should provide an atmosphere which respects the close nature of the multiple bond while at the same time encouraging individual abilities."

INDIVIDUALITY

Much of the reasoning behind the trend to separate twins or higher order multiples into separate classrooms has been that this separation will foster the development of individuality. However, authors, who are themselves twins, suggest that individuality is best fostered by promoting the self-esteem of each child. Ways of encouraging individuality are:

- giving praise for individual accomplishments and
- avoiding verbal comparisons.

It has further been suggested that too much emphasis may be placed upon ineffective methods of developing individuality - making sure that twins are dressed differently, forcing them to develop opposite outside interests, and making sure that twins are separated upon entrance to school. Perhaps, twins - especially identicals who share the same genetic makeup - **are** expressing individuality when they choose:

- the same activities,
- the same dress, or
- share the same mannerisms.

Perhaps twins - especially identicals who share the same genetic makeup - are expressing individuality when they choose the same activities, the same dress, or share the same mannerisms.

RETENTION AND/OR SCHOOL READINESS OF ONE MULTIPLE

In some pairs, it is felt that one twin shows signs of being ready to begin school while the other does not. This is particularly common in opposite-sex twins when the girl is generally ready before her brother. The problem becomes more complex in higher order multiples where a variety of gender combinations can exist. A kindergarten teacher responding to NOMOTC's survey of educators wrote: "After teaching kindergarten for five years, my opinion is that children should start kindergarten at their correct age - regardless of ability.

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Survey Respondent

"A kindergarten teacher is trained in early childhood techniques," she continued. "Each child is taught according to his/her capabilities."

All children mature at differing rates, and one that is considered to be developmentally behind during kindergarten may have "caught up" by first or second grade. The mother of triplet girls in pre-kindergarten was presented with a dilemma concerning development when the teacher suggested that one of the girls was ready to be skipped to kindergarten ahead of her sisters. The mother related that she was happy and proud of the fact that one of her children was gifted, yet worried that the others might feel they were being punished, or that the promoted child might feel punished by being separated from her sisters. The parents of these girls decided not to separate at this point.

There are times when one twin may be doing poorly in school and retention is recommended. Retention of one twin should be a last resort as it is rarely the answer to the problem. In the case of twins, both suffer resentment. The passing twin often feels guilt that he "has all the brains." The retained twin often feels he will never measure up. About half the educators felt that one twin should not be retained if the other is failing. Ninety-two percent recommended special tutoring before retention is considered. In fact, almost all respondents to the educators' survey felt that if only one twin was ready for kindergarten, both should wait another year.

Decisions to send one twin or higher order multiple to school before his co-multiple or to retain one of a set of multiples should be made very carefully, and should only be done after all other solutions fail. It is best to identify the problem and provide the appropriate services or remediation. All

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authorities recommend intervention programs and consulting a psychologist before coming to such a decision.

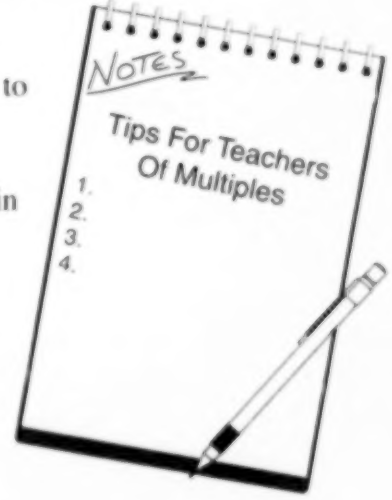
ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Dissatisfaction with public school policies may cause parents to seek alternative schooling methods. Private school has always been available to those with the means and inclination, but in recent years the charter school movement has seen rapid growth. **Charter schools** are actually public schools which maintain a special contract with a local or state agency and receive public funds for a specified period. The charter school can set its own goals for student achievement and provide new models of education free from the policies of the local schools. According to the second-year report of the National Study of Charter Schools sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and released in 1998, parents are often attracted to charter schools because of their nurturing and safe environment, quality of academic achievement, high standards, small class size and specialized curricula.

Home schooling affords parents the ultimate control over their children's education. The ability to travel and maintain close family relationships were also cited as major advantages to home schooling. As one homeschooler of twins put it, "I don't want to send my children off to have someone else take care of them and teach them things they think are important. I can best manipulate their environment to give them the ultimate in options." Homeschoolers often find support through other homeschoolers and can obtain information through the Internet where distance learning opportunities abound. One disadvantage to home schooling might be the time commitment required of the parents.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS OF MULTIPLES

Barry and Francine McNamara support the notion of placing twins in different classes to reinforce the individual student's identity in school. They believe that placing twins in the same class reinforces society's stereotype of twin children as a "unit," with little attention being given to their individual attributes. Regardless of whether twins are separated in school, the role of educators is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each child, and to develop lesson plans to meet the needs of all children. The following tips are designed to help



teachers avoid the pitfall of treating twins as a unit:

- When twins are in the same classroom, make sure they are not sitting together. This makes it easier to identify who's who. This also serves as a deterrent to twins who are contemplating doing one another's work.
- Try to find physical differences between identical twins in the same classroom. If possible, ask parents for tips for quick identification. Some ways of identification might be handedness, birthmarks/moles/freckles, differently slanted handwriting, slight voice differences, different facial widths, etc. Physical identification of the twins is the first step toward personality identification.
- Expect differences in behavior, personality, and test scores. But, don't be surprised when differences cannot be found.
- Always refer to each twin by name within the classroom. This not only helps you learn to identify each, it serves as a good example to students by helping them realize that twins are separate individuals.
- Avoid insensitive comparisons. An example would be saying to one twin, "You are smarter than your sister." This type of comparison is detrimental to the self-esteem of both twins.
- If one member of a set of twins (especially identical twins) is markedly behind the other twin, investigate the cause. Remember that the IQs of twins are remarkably similar under normal circumstances.
- Check to make sure that each twin is doing his own work.
- Plan a conference with parents to gather more information. You might want to ask if one twin suffered birth trauma, a birth defect, frequent illness.
- Don't rule out the possible existence of a learning disability in one of a twin pair. It is as possible for one of an identical twin pair as it is for one of a fraternal pair to have a handicap. Scheinfeld says that up to a point, differences in identical twins may be encouraged as leading to personality development, but there is danger if one twin consistently falls behind the other to any marked degree.
- Plan parent conferences to discuss the progress of each child individually.

Drs. Joseph S. Renzulli and Ann M. McGreevy, who conducted the study, "Twins Included and Not Included in Special Programs for the Gifted," offer several additional recommendations pertaining to twins in special programs. Their recommendations follow:

1. "Do not place both twins in a special program simply because they are twins...Nevertheless, cases of identical twins should be treated with great care and sensitivity...Under most circumstances, both identical twins should be capable of benefiting from a special program (when one has been selected) and depending upon the nature of the relationship between the twins, they may enjoy and profit from being in the program together."
2. "We recommend that the program should encourage the twin who is not

included in the program to be a guest participant in the special program, especially on those occasions when activities such as a guest speaker, field trips, or other special events are being planned. Such occasional participation may allow Twin A (the twin who is in the program) to share his enthusiasm for the program with Twin B (his co-twin) and may serve the purpose of increasing motivation and performance in Twin B."

3. "Whenever possible, twins should be provided with opportunities for collaborative efforts on school projects and home projects."
4. "We recommend that school records indicate somewhere that a student is a member of a multiple birth. Presently, most school records do not note this information. The more we know about a child, the better we, as educators, are able to help that child learn. Although we believe that individuality should be respected and encouraged, the special effect of the 'twinship bond' may present situations where twins can best express their individuality when they are most like their brother or sister. This recommendation is especially important in the case of identical twins."
5. "Our major recommendation relates to the finding about differences in style between Twins A and B. In most cases, Twin A was selected for the special program because he or she displayed the types of motivation and performance that are most consistent with the traditional academic view of the achieving student. But the non-selected students (Twin B) oftentimes expressed the kinds of creativity and preferences for open-ended and unstructured learning that are frequently valued by special programs for gifted and talented. These creative and divergent thinking skills are oftentimes 'lost' when the major criterion for selection into special programs is based on strict assessment of academic performance...In many cases, parents reported that 'the wrong twin' was selected for the program...Special consideration should be given to these types of abilities and learning styles, especially, in the cases of twin assessment."

Tips Specific To Higher Order Multiples

The following tips offered by educators and parents of higher order multiples are designed to help teachers of higher order multiples:

- Treat each child as an individual, but be aware that each set of multiples has its own "group" dynamic. Some multiples really resent being called "the triplets" while other children might not mind. Take your cues from the multiples themselves on whether to "lecture" a classmate who calls them "the triplets." It might not necessarily be a big deal.
- Monitor the multiples individually and carefully for learning problems and differences in learning styles. Separate gradually, if needed, even considering placement in separate schools if one school lacks the classroom space to separate.

- If a problem is noted, adjustments in classroom placement should be made as soon as possible. Don't wait for the start of a new school year.
- Give parents specific feedback. Rather than say or write a note that "all your children are doing well," or "all your kids could benefit from being more responsible about completing work on time," list several points and examples about each child.
- Because they have grown up together more closely than other siblings, be aware that multiples may do their homework in a very similar way, but not necessarily copying from each other. Of course, also be aware that multiples may indeed have worked out a strategy to "share" homework duties, so definitely discuss any concerns you have about this with the parents right away! Again, be ready with specific points for each child.

Jeanna, Anna and Nora Heink, triplet daughters of Jill Heink, had one additional tip to offer teachers. "If you like to arrange seats or give out papers in alphabetical order, try to mix things up a little bit so we're not always one after another," they said.

TO SEPARATE OR NOT TO SEPARATE: WHO SHOULD DECIDE?

As one teacher with a set of identical twins in her class responded in NOMOTC's survey, "Until this year, I have always felt that twins should be separated, but it has been very easy having both in my class."

"Although they have different strengths and weaknesses," she continued. "I find them difficult to tell apart. The children have no trouble in this area. While in class, I never refer to them as 'the twins.' I now feel that it (placement decision) should be left up to the parents."

Parents and teachers should not be reluctant to reverse a separation decision if the situation warrants it.

However, parents are often unsure about how their multiples will respond to separation at school. Some prefer to leave the final decision up to the teacher or principal. Unfortunately, as indicated by several surveys, teachers and school administrators often know less about twins than parents themselves. Almost three-quarters of the educator respondents in the most recent survey felt that adults at their school had trouble telling the twins apart. And further, 29 percent felt it was acceptable to call the multiples "the twins" (or "the triplets") which was up from 22 percent in the survey of 10 years ago.

Parents and teachers should not be reluctant to reverse a separation decision if the situation warrants it. Nancy Kenny, a teacher and parent of identical boys who are now in eighth grade, made this comment, "after separating them

(in first grade), I wanted the decision changed. One twin had difficulty adjusting and I realized I made a mistake. I met with opposition from the administration. At first I believed that they would flourish independently. I'm regretful—I should have kept them together."

Separation certainly works for some twins; but it certainly doesn't work for all of them as Pam Novotny points out in her book, **The Joy Of Twins**. She says, "While most researchers who study twins and their development find little to agree on, they do agree on this: There is absolutely no evidence - developmental or otherwise - to support separating twins in school as a general policy."

Corliss and Joe Hubert, parents of fraternal twin sons, saw their multiples suffer academically because of a forced separation policy. Gifted mathematically, both boys were ahead of their classmates at the fourth grade level. They were each working independently out of more advanced textbooks. The Huberts, both mathematics teachers, suggested that the boys be allowed to work together on math problems as a means of further support for their development. School administration agreed with this request. In fact, the boys were assigned to the same classroom for the next two years after being separated since pre-kindergarten! **When a policy is not in the best interest of the children, it should be tested and overruled.**

Further support for parents' right to resist a mandatory separation policy comes from Lana Larsen Dean in her article, "Mandatory Twin Separation in Schools: How Parents Can Best Rely on Another Set of 'Twins' — Meyer and Pierce — to Keep Their Children Together." In her article, published in 1999, she states the following:

> *"Because the traditional family relationship and parental choices relating to that relationship are fully protected under the Constitution, the school, by employing such an arbitrary 'one size fits all' policy, totally usurps the parents' right to make a crucial decision about what is best for their family. Fortunately, some schools are realizing that only through parent participation in evaluating twins, on a case by case basis, will the school be able to provide a mutually beneficial placement for the twins."*

Should the decision to separate or keep multiples together be left to parents and educators? As multiples advance in age, particularly during adolescence, they need to become a part of the decision-making process. The Twins Foundation, an international clearinghouse of information for and about twins and twin research, provides an example in terms of twins. According to an article, "Twins in School," published in the organization's newsletter:

"A majority of twins do not suffer from being in classes together, especially in the early elementary years. When the conflicts come, if they are going to

come, is during the onset of adolescence...Adolescence is often a time of traumatic changes...but for twins, adolescence may produce added conflicts and confusions that their single-born peers do not face to the same degree...The inner turmoil twins are naturally feeling becomes a challenge to the twinship from within rather than from without... Jealousies and conflicts of interest seem to arise from nowhere. The sense of 'my space' and 'your space' suddenly becomes a major issue."

Teen twins begin individually searching for "self" and wondering why and how that "self" must reflect on the other.

The differing relationships of adolescent twins in school are emphasized by S.C., another teacher who responded to the NOMOTC survey. She wrote:

> *"I teach sixth grade science. This year, I had two sets of identical twins and one set of fraternal twins. The girls, who are identical, get along great and are in the same classes all day long...I see many differences in the girls. Homework, classwork, and test scores are never the same! The identical boys could not stand to be in the same room with each other, got a schedule change, and never did anything together at school...One of the boys even got his hair cut very short so that he would not look like his brother.*
>
> *"I treat all of these twins as individuals. I never call them 'twins.' The longer I have them, the better I get to know each child."*

After her experiences, S.C. feels that each child should be treated as an individual, and came to the conclusion that his/her placement in school should be decided by the teacher, parents, and the students.

Other educators also confirm school placement decisions should involve the "team" approach. Indeed, as Dr. David Brax, a school superintendent from Kansas explains, educators should keep in mind that informed parents are the best decision-makers concerning their children.

"Administrators lack a knowledge base of what's best in terms of placement of multiples. If we want to do what's best for the kids, we need to work with parents, and consider each case on an individual basis," he said.

Parents of multiples should be invited to schedule an appointment to share information and feelings about "multiple" issues with the educational "team" — teacher, counselor, and principal. If they are mature enough to express themselves, the multiples should also share their feelings about classroom placement either as part of the conference or by relaying the information through their parents. A sharing and information session can help make the educators' job much easier. This will, hopefully, lead to a classroom placement decision that is pleasing to all parties.

After counseling with different multiples and their parents, educators will begin to see that one general, rigid policy cannot apply to all. Just as square pegs do not fit into round holes, all individuals and all multiple relationships do not fit one policy. This is a reality that reaffirms our premise and leads to NOMOTC's recommendation that **placement of each set of multiples be evaluated on an individual basis.**

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Appendix

Guidelines for the Education of Multiple Birth Children, 1998.

Introduction

In the United States the incidence of multiple births is approximately 1 in 39 for twins and 1 in 657 for triplets and higher order multiples. Over 100,500 twins and 5,900 triplets and higher order multiples are born each year. While the vast majority of multiple births continue to be twins, a recent study showed that higher order births have doubled since 1990 and quadrupled since 1980. New fertility drugs and assisted reproductive techniques make it likely that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

Statement of Purpose

As a national support organization for parents of twins and higher order multiples, the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. (NOMOTC) has as its purpose the education of parents, teachers and other individuals having direct responsibility and interest in the special aspects of child development which relate to multiple birth children. This paper is intended as a set of general guidelines which will enable educators and school support staffs to become better acquainted with the special social and psychological considerations affecting multiple birth children and their families.

Glossary of Terms

multiple birth children -- a group of two (twins) or more (higher order) children who typically are conceived at the same time of the same parents, are born at the same time, and share a certain biological and genetic make-up.

identical -- monozygotic, or one egg twins or higher order multiples who share all their genes in common; they are always the same sex, have identical features, eye and hair color.

fraternal -- dizygotic, or two egg twins or higher order multiples resulting from the separate fertilization of two (or more) ova; fraternal siblings have their own unique genes and may be same sex or different sex.

mirror image twins -- monozygotic twins with identical features displayed on opposite sides of the body; left handed identicals are often mirror image co-twins.

higher order multiples -- a multiple birth set consisting of three or more children (triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, etc.)

co-twin or co-multiple -- one child of a multiple birth set

singleton -- a child who is not part of a multiple birth set

Guidelines

The general guidelines which follow are intended for use at all levels of education and provide a broad framework within which educators may begin to dialogue on this topic. Resources are listed at the end.

Basic Principles

Due to the ever-increasing number of multiple births in the U.S., and due to the special social and psychological considerations involving multiple birth children, educators and educational training institutions should consider the following:

1. **School should provide an atmosphere which respects the close nature of the multiple bond while at the same time encouraging individual abilities.** A basic knowledge of the psychology of multiple birth children, especially as it differs between identicals and fraternals, is essential. An awareness of the depth of bonding between identical siblings and some same-sex fraternals will promote greater sensitivity to the needs of these children. An understanding that each multiple birth child is unique (even when the child is part of an identical set) will prompt the school staff to recognize and encourage each child's abilities. Educators should learn to recognize each child in a set of multiples individually without resorting to extraordinary means such as requiring identical twins to wear name tags, different color clothes or different hair styles. The children should be called correctly by their own names and not simply referred to as "the twins." The classroom teachers should be able to recognize each child's particular academic strengths and weaknesses. No overt comparisons should be made between siblings in a multiple set.

2. **Schools should maintain a flexible placement policy throughout the early elementary school years.** Consultation with parents and the involved children will provide clearer insights into how the children's needs can best be served. Placement decisions should not be made for the purpose of promoting the children's individuality or for the teachers' convenience and ease of name/face recognition. Successful placement involves a collaborative decision which allows for ease of separation from the parent and the other multiple as well as for successful social and academic growth. These decisions should be reviewed annually to see if they are accomplishing the desired purpose.

3. **When multiple birth children are enrolled in different classrooms at the same grade level there is a need for a consistent approach to instruction and classroom management.** Teachers at the same grade level need to coordinate their efforts when a set of multiples is split between their classrooms. Primary-age multiples often experience disappointment, confusion, anger and other negative emotions about their school experiences. These are often the result of teacher-directed activities in one classroom which may be lacking in another. Jealousy and anger may be directed toward the sibling who is perceived to have the "better classroom." Multiples who are separated in

same grade classrooms can become a catalyst for improving team-teaching techniques and inspiring a more evenly balanced program of instruction. While this problem may lessen by the middle school years, teachers and administrators still need to recognize the very real problems which placement in separate classrooms can cause for multiple birth students.

4. **Educators should move with extreme caution when considering retention, acceleration, or designation in any one of the areas of exceptionality of one or more children in a set of multiples.** Psychological and social considerations involving the nature of the multiple bond must receive equal weight with academic considerations. The effects of school retention, acceleration, or designation in any area of exceptionality are much greater on a multiple birth child since they may alter the sibling relationship in a profound manner. These effects can range from mild loss of self-esteem and confusion over the status of the siblings in the multiple-birth grouping to a deeper sense of loss of identity with the co-multiple(s) and feelings of anger and rejection. On the other hand, there is a definite need to separate the multiple birth issue from the issue of what is best for the individual child. As a result, the question of retention, acceleration, or designation in an area of exceptionality of a multiple birth child is highly complicated and needs to be approached with full consideration of all the possible benefits and harm which may result from the decision. Teachers needs to be sensitive to the feelings and actions of all co-multiples and alert to possible problems for all of the children. If retention or acceleration is unavoidable, counseling services should be made available to all of the affected multiples.

5. **Teachers at the primary, middle and high school levels should value parental input regarding the nature of the multiples' relationship.** Classroom observations, particularly if the multiples are in separate classrooms, will not provide educators with enough knowledge to make informed decisions which may affect the children's social or psychological well-being. Usually, parents can provide information into the dynamics at work within the children's relationship at any given point in their development. At the primary level teachers need to become aware of the level of dependency between the co-multiples and respond in a manner which makes each child comfortable. Adolescent multiples may be having difficulty with their relationship as each strives to establish an independent identity. Identical and fraternal relationships will differ, as will relationships between same sex and different sex fraternals. Parents can offer insights which will enable the educator to respond in a more effective manner to the needs of the children.

6. **School districts should provide staff at all grade levels with multiple-**

related research and reading materials. Educators should seek out the latest research findings regarding the psychology of multiple birth children and incorporate these findings into their pedagogy. Reading materials regarding multiple birth children should be available in all faculty libraries. Inservice programs related to this topic would benefit the instruction of multiple birth children. Parents of older multiple birth children should be contacted as resource persons. Teachers who are aware of the literature and the issues affecting multiple birth children are another welcome source of support for multiple birth families and may become the vital link between these families and available support groups and programs.

7. **At the university level, schools of education should include research findings into the psychology of twins and higher order multiples in their curricula.** Attention should be paid to preparing teachers who are informed and sensitive to the needs of an increasing population of multiple birth children.

Conclusions

The needs of an increasing population of multiple birth children should be considered at all levels of educational instruction. School policies, decisions and instruction which are based on a sound understanding of the psychology and social development of multiples will enable these children to move through the school years more happily and successfully. Any assumption that twins and higher order multiples have the same needs as singleton children can be damaging and counterproductive to the purpose of the educational institution. Appropriate research and literature exists which can provide a basis for a sensitive, knowledge-based approach to the education of multiple birth children. Parents and experts in the field should be considered valued resources for assisting school administrators and faculties with decisions affecting multiples.

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NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MOTHERS OF TWINS CLUBS

The National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc. (NOMOTC), a support group for parents of twins and higher order multiples, is a network of local clubs nationwide whose basic purposes are research and education. NOMOTC is non-profit, funded by dues, donations and grants. In addition to providing club development information, NOMOTC cooperates with qualified researchers and conducts organizational research, serves as a clearinghouse of educational information, and hosts an annual convention.

NOMOTC
A SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS OF TWINS AND HIGHER ORDER MULTIPLES

The Executive Office of NOMOTC is the focus for referrals, research, membership, publicity and educational information. With the exception of the trained professional staff at headquarters, NOMOTC workers are volunteers from local chapters or from the roster of individual affiliate members throughout the United States.

NOMOTC publishes a bi-monthly publication, MOTC's *Notebook*. This award-winning newsmagazine contains feature articles about parents of multiples and their children, parenting tips, summary reports of organizational research studies, convention highlights, departmental news, book reviews and items of club and individual interest. NOMOTC also publishes information specific to multiple birth families to a worldwide audience via their website (www.nomotc.org). The website includes selected articles from MOTC's *Notebook*, a current bibliography of multiple-related literature, information specific to expectant parents of multiples, membership information, and more.

NOMOTC provides a four-part Support Services program geared to individual concerns. This program particularly benefits those needing support which is unavailable locally. A "pen pal" program aids mothers of multiples having children with disabilities or illnesses, and also assists parents who may themselves have disabilities which affect their parenting skills. A Bereavement Support outreach program assists those parents who have experienced the loss of one or more of their multiple birth children. The Single Parent outreach offers widowed, divorced, and never married parents opportunities to share information. The Higher Order Multiple support program offers information to parents of triplets, quadruplets, and more.

NOMOTC maintains a Multiple Birth Database, an information registry containing data about thousands of multiple birth sets. The information in the database, used only with permission of participants, is available to qualified medical and educational researchers. All parents of multiples, whether or not they are members of NOMOTC, are encouraged to complete the Multiple Birth Data Form.

"It is incumbent on those of us in education to acquaint ourselves with the unique educational needs of each student we serve. I found this publication to be a very valuable resource in identifying what all of us need to know in order to provide the optimal teaching and learning environment for twins."

Stephen W. Hefner, Ed.D.
Superintendent in South Carolina

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